

**Statement of Joseph Snyder Director, Older Adult Protective Service,
Philadelphia Corporation for Aging
On behalf of the National Association of Adult Protective Service
Administrators (NAAPSA)**

**For Senate Special Committee on Aging
Senators Breaux, Craig and Others
October 20, 2003**

Good Afternoon. I'm Joe Snyder, Director of Older Adult Protective Services at the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Today I am representing the National Association of Adult Protective Services Administrators or NAAPSA. NAAPSA is the only national association that represents the interests of Adult Protective Service Administrators and the victims they serve from across the country. NAAPSA provides leadership, technical assistance, training and support to administrators throughout the United States. NAAPSA is a member of the National Center on Elder Abuse and partners with various entities that are interested in the welfare of the most at risk adults in our society. The mission of NAAPSA is to improve the quality and availability of services for disabled adults and elderly persons who are abused, neglected, or exploited and other vulnerable adults who are unable to protect their own interest.

Adult Protective Services (APS) are those critical services provided to vulnerable adults age 18 and over, who have physical or mental disabilities which prevent them from protecting themselves from abuse, exploitation, and neglect by themselves or others.

Sadly, this abuse, neglect and exploitation come most often from family members. A survey of all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Guam was conducted by NAAPSA in 2000. It found that family members were the identified perpetrators in 62% of all substantiated abuse reports.

An 85-year old Pennsylvania woman had been a victim of physical abuse by her husband for over 50 years. After repeated APS referrals she finally admitted the abuse had taken place stating, "He never hits me in the face, only where it can't be seen by anyone else. He only hits me now when I can't walk." She finally made the choice to move into a nursing home saying, "it's both good and bad being away from him."

An 84- year old female from Tennessee lived alone with 77 cats and dogs. The client appeared to have not bathed or changed her clothes for years. She told APS that the animals were her only company. She knew that her clothes were rotting off but her son, a local attorney who lived nearby, charged her \$20 to wash her clothes so there was nothing she could do. In order to fight off the dogs and cats, an APS worker remained with the client while she was eating so she could finish her food. APS counselors were able to put in services to clean the home and her clothes. APS contacted the client's daughter from out of state. She came and took the client back home to live with her.

A Wyoming man stands accused of intentionally abusing or neglecting his 91-year-old mother after an investigation done by APS and the police. The woman was found sitting in a reclining chair in her own urine and feces with multiple bruises all over her body. The son, who had not been employed for over four years, was using his mother's social security check to pay himself to care for her. Two cases of beer and a half empty liter of whiskey were found by investigators upon their arrival.

These compelling stories are an everyday occurrence for APS staff and their victims. While research is scant in many areas, we do know certain things. We know that caregiver stress is not a valid cause for the abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable elders and adults. There are many caregivers who, despite enormous stress, do not abuse. We know that the elements of power and control so familiar to those in the field of Domestic Violence are present in many of our cases. We also know that other characteristics of the perpetrators, most notably addiction to drugs or alcohol or the presence of mental illness are prevalent in our casework.

APS continues to need support to serve this forgotten population and to combat this overwhelming problem of family on family violence. According to information collected from 36 states in 2002, the number of reports to APS programs increased 14% from 1999 to 2001. A recent informal NAAPSA survey of state APS administrators taken earlier this month showed that 30% of their programs had experienced staff reductions in the past year.

According to a 2000 Survey of State APS programs conducted by NAAPSA, out of the 40 states which responded to the question on sources of funding of APS programs, 47.5% of the states relied solely or in part on the Social

Services Block Grant (SSBG), and an additional 20% depended only on state and local funds. As part of Welfare reform in 1996, the Congress and the Governors reduced SSBG funding from \$2.8 billion dollars to \$2.38 billion dollars with the promise of restoration to the \$2.8 billion dollars in FY 03. The agreement was broken and SSBG funding was reduced to \$1.7 billion dollars a reduction of more than 1 billion dollars less than the 1996 level. This has resulted in a reduction of APS services in some states. It is imperative that SSBG be fully restored to the \$2.8 billion dollar level. We hope that the Senate version of the CARE Act will prevail in conference and SSBG will be restored to the \$2.8 billion dollar level.

The APS community and all those who care about this at risk population would like to thank Senators Breaux and Hatch and the now 58 other co-sponsors for the introduction of the Elder Justice Act. This is the most important piece of federal legislation in the history of the Adult Protective Services movement. The bill provides a federal home for adult protective services along with a consistent funding source. The Elder Justice Act provides support to state and community efforts to assure adequate resources to prevent, detect, and reduce the significant social problem known as elder abuse. The Elder Justice Act will increase the knowledge base as well as support research and training activities dedicated to stopping this epidemic that will only increase in the coming years. The ability to provide a forensic capacity and increase prosecutions and collaborative efforts is essential if the field is to move forward. NAAPSA and APS administrators across the nation urge you to help us combat this epidemic of family violence by supporting the Elder Justice Act and restoring full funding to the Social Services Block Grant. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today